

# A Biologist's Never-ending Passion for New Discoveries

By LONG Yun

Eight years ago, Ben-David Yaacov, a renowned Canadian medical scientist, moved to China with the hope of discovering a cure for cancer using a combination of Western and traditional Chinese medical practices.

On September 30 of this year, Yaacov received the Chinese Government Friendship Award at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing.

Speaking of his feelings as a recipient of the highest award for foreigners in China, Yaacov said he felt more respected for his scientific contribution in China than other places he has worked in.



Professor Ben-David Yaacov. (COURTESY PHOTO)

**Understanding TCM**

Yaacov is not only notable for his achievements in anti-tumor pharmacology, but also for internationalizing traditional Chinese medicine (TCM).

Despite its time-honored history, TCM is still not widely accepted globally because few scientific studies have been done on it. He hopes to change the situation with his work and bridge the gap between TCM and Western medicine, to make more people fully aware of the working mechanism of Chinese herbal medicine.

"From my perspective, TCM has been mainly practical for thousands of years, but there is not enough understanding of its working principles," he told *Science and Technology Daily*.

After coming to China, Yaacov's understanding and appreciation of TCM has deepened.

"TCM as a precious part of Chinese culture, has not yet had enough influence in the world, and many people do not realize its excellence. For example, Western medicine has begun to emphasize 'personalized' treatment in recent years, but it has been valued in Chinese medicine for thousands of years. It seeks to restore balance through treatment specific to the individual," said Yaacov, adding that TCM's targeting function gives him more confidence for its international prospects.

**The opportunity ahead**

Since Yaacov put down roots in China's Guizhou province, he has been driven by his passion for new discoveries, especially TCM.

He is now the director of the cancer biology platform of the Laboratory for Chemistry of Natural Products, Chinese Academy of Sciences in Guizhou.

Yaacov's first visit to the laboratory was introduced by Yang Meili, one of his colleagues in Canada, who happened to be a former student of Hao Xiaojiang, director of the laboratory. In terms of his decision to choose Guizhou, Yaacov mentioned its ample resources

of TCM and specialists with the knowledge of isolating pure compounds from natural herbal remedies.

"My original research in Canada was suspended because of a lack of funds. I planned to change my research direction to drug development for cancer treatment. It is exciting to conduct unexplored areas of study," he noted.

He said that experts here [in China] extract compounds from TCM and there has to be a biologist familiar with their functions, which is his area of expertise.

"Here I have access to everything new and locally sourced," he said, adding that Chinese scientist Tu Youyou, who won Nobel Prize in medicine for her research on an antimalarial substance, inspires him.

"I have been given sufficient support mentally and financially from my institution, and the people around me are quite nice," he said.

**Connection with China**

Yaacov applauded China's positive role in facilitating international cooperation in the sci-tech community. In recent years, China has taken measures to embrace more experts around the globe and accelerate international exchanges.

Currently living in Guiyang, he said he thoroughly enjoys the convenient life there. When talking about the high-tech applications in daily life, Yaacov said mobile payments in China are incredible and futuristic. He is also impressed by the changes happening in Guizhou and his institution.

Yaacov has taken advantage of his vast network of contacts to help Guizhou facilitate its international exchanges, including introducing top scientists to take part in conferences.

"I do want my friends to know the real China by telling them the stories [about what it's like] here all the time. I invite foreign scientists to attend the conferences here, and I have to bust the rumors about China on the Internet with more vivid examples," he said.

# Home Away From Home Essay Contest

By BI Weizi

On the evening of November 13, a unique award ceremony for the "Home Away from Home" Essay Contest was held in Xiamen, Fujian province. The contest gathers stories from foreigners living across China and reveal comprehensive and real life scenarios from across the country to the public at large.

Despite the different nationalities and backgrounds of the writers, they have made China their second home

and become motivated by the innovation and entrepreneurial opportunities in the country. A total of 55 foreigners from 25 countries contributed to the contest. The articles were published on social media platforms in China and internationally receiving a positive response.

Based on the number of social media likes, views and website votes the contest received, five winners were selected: Smita and Roshan from India, Szabolcs from Hungary, Bong from the Philippines and Karla from the United

States; five other contestants from South Africa, France, Spain, the Philippines and the Czech Republic won the additional Special Award.

With their personal experiences, the essays convey life in China from a perspective of an expat's eyes, making the country more understandable to a foreign audience. The award ceremony also gives foreign experts in Xiamen a new perception of the entrepreneurial environment and the future development direction Xiamen is taking.

At the award ceremony, the new lo-

cal Foreign Talent Service Station and the recently launched facilitation policies were also introduced. These include a "one-stop" service platform for immigration affairs, and the first "joint window" for "tackling one - thing" in the province along with the evaluation policy of foreign experts. The director of the Xiamen Foreign Expert Affairs Bureau issued certificates to five locally based foreign employees who had passed the new experts evaluation system.

*Source: Xiamen Municipal Bureau of Science and Technology*



Mr. Kim Roper. (COURTESY PHOTO)

## Letter to the Editor

# Seeing is Believing

By Kim Roper

It has been over 4 years since my wife and I went to Xi'an to teach English at Xi'an International Studies University (XISU) as part of the Brigham Young University's Teachers in China program. There are very few days that go by that I don't ask myself the question, "What if we had never gone to China?" My experience in China changed my life. I am so much a better person for having had this experience. I see the world and humanity so differently now than before I went to China.

When we first arrived in China it was definitely a "Culture Shock!" Everything was different and foreign from what we knew and were accustomed to. The language was different both written and spoken. The food was different. The smells and sights were different. The crowds of people, the stores, the transportation were all different. It was hard to see anything that wasn't different to us.

At first, all I could see were the differences, but the longer I was in China, and the longer I worked with the wonderful students at XISU, all I could see were the similarities, not the differences. My eyes were opened, not to how different we were, but how similar we were to the Chinese people. I recognized the same personalities in my Chinese students as American students. They had the same humor, fears, dreams, talents and interests as we do. I learned that even though our politics may be different, our people are the same.

I learned to love the Chinese people, and even their food. I met so many wonderful, kind and helpful people. I still remember my students by name. I remember the kind lady we bought fruit from on the street. I remember the gentleman who cooked such delicious noodles for us in one of the narrow alleys near our home. Whenever we needed some help, there were always kind people willing to help us.

Our experience also gave us the opportunity to travel throughout China to see the natural beauties of this country. We have visited more beautiful sites in China than probably most Chinese have.

We have visited the deserts near Urumqi in the west, the freezing ice cities of Harbin in the north, and the beautiful warm beaches of Hainan in the south. We have seen the pandas in Chengdu, the massive Three Gorges Dam on the Yangtze River, the ancient city of Pingyao, the Great Wall and Forbidden City in Beijing, the natural beauty of Guilin and Zhangjiajie, and the great cities of Shanghai and Hong Kong. Most beautiful however was our Chinese home in Xi'an. What a beautiful city with its historical Terra Cotta Warriors, ancient towers and beautiful parks. Before this experience, I would have never thought of visiting China. Now I tell everyone I meet, "You must visit China! It is so beautiful."

I have had the privilege of having 5 of my former XISU students to visit me and my family in the United States. They feel like family to me. As they have been in my home and got to know my family, my family has discovered the same thing I learned. We have far more in common with the Chinese people than we have differences.

*(Mr. Roper is a foreign teacher from Xi'an International Studies University.)*

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*(Mr. Roper is a foreign teacher from Xi'an International Studies University.)*

# Benefits of COVID-19 Vaccine Booster Shot

By Staff Reporters

China has expanded vaccine inoculation, with booster shots in particular, to combat COVID-19 and build an immune barrier as the novel coronavirus continues to spread worldwide. China is providing COVID-19 booster shots to its residents free of charge.

Wang Huaqing, chief expert on immunization planning at the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, said in a press conference on October 30 that based on domestic and foreign research results, antibody levels will decline after six months and the protective effect weakens with time. However, a booster shot is a quick way to raise antibody levels.

Moreover, since the antibody level after a booster shot was administered is still higher than the peak level after the first and second doses of vaccine, it can reinforce its protection function, said Wang.

At present, China has launched a nationwide COVID-19 campaign, which recommends that people who have completed a six-month vaccination period can be given the booster jab.

Regarding people's worries about the vaccination interval, Wang said on November 6 that based on past experience, if the interval between vaccinations is increased, its overall immune effect will not be significantly affected.

However, if the interval lasts longer, as the antibody level declines, the risk of infection will increase. He recom-

mended that everyone get the booster shot as soon as possible following the guidelines.

Wang also noted that according to the needs of pandemic prevention and control, the priority groups of booster shots had been identified, including workers at airports, ports, border inspections, hospitals, people over 60 and individuals with weak immune systems.

In addition to these priority groups, localities can also expand the scope of the population for booster shots based on local conditions and needs for COVID-19 prevention and control, and provide enhanced immunization services to other eligible people who need booster shots.

He also said in the press conference held on November 6 that 37.973 million people in China have been offered booster shots up to now.

In terms of the elderly with weaker immune systems, National Health Commission official Zheng Zhongwei said on a CCTV interview on November 15 that, despite the high vaccination rate in China, the vaccination rate among the elderly is relatively low, as they are at a much higher risk of severe illness and death from COVID-19.

"Accelerating vaccination work among the elderly is key to promoting the health vaccination campaign well," he said, adding that only in this way will China be able to take the initiative and gain time to adjust the national strategy for the prevention and control of the pandemic.

## Service Info

# Qilian Mountain National Park

The Qilian Mountain National Park, which covers a total area of 50,200 km<sup>2</sup>, is located at the junction area of Gansu province and Qinghai province. It is home to a variety of wild animals such as snow leopards, which are under first-class state protection in China. Thanks to the Qilian Mountain, a complex ecosystem of mountain forests, temperate desert grasslands, alpine meadows and glacial snow-capped mountains exists in the arid desert belt of northwest China. It is an important ecological security barrier in western China.

(PHOTO: XINHUA)

